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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 STATE 021218

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [KPKO](#)

SUBJECT: DEMARCHE REQUEST ON ETHIOPIA-ERITREA: FUTURE OF
UN PRESENCE, POSSIBLE TARGETED SANCTIONS ON ERITREA

Classified By: IO PDAS James B. Warlick, reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. This is an action request. Please see paragraphs 4-9.

Begin Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Eritrea's interference with the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), particularly its recent refusal to reinstate fuel supplies to the Mission and subsequent obstruction of UNMEE's withdrawal, raise fundamental questions about the future UN role in the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict as well as the credibility of the UN in confronting a state that is acting in contravention of repeated Security Council demands. Department requests action addressees seek Security Council members' views on whether more coercive action against Eritrea is needed. Department also requests action addressees to share U.S. views on the next steps for the UNMEE peacekeeping mission and to determine Security Council attitudes on the potential reconfiguration or disbandment of UNMEE; to examine how to maintain a UN presence in Eritrea and Ethiopia; and to determine what future role the UN can have in the border conflict. USUN should also discuss options for UNMEE with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), and discuss what type of UN presence could be sustainable and most effectively support ongoing efforts to bring the parties into talks aimed at normalizing relations.

¶3. (C) Although the Department has not yet determined its position on the utility of sanctions on Eritrea, Department requests action addressees to assess the utility and likelihood of support for tougher Security Council action, including potential implementation of a sanctions resolution targeting Eritrea in the event that it continues to obstruct UNMEE's operations and/or withdrawal. Sanctions might be linked to a date certain for Eritrea to comply with Security

Council demands. The Department also requests Embassies Amman and New Delhi to approach host governments, both of which are major troop contributors to UNMEE, to determine whether or not they would encourage Security Council members to support a sanctions regime on Eritrea. Posts in these troop-contributing countries (TCC) should also ask Jordan and India to consider the option of moving equipment being used by UNMEE to other areas in Africa, specifically Darfur. An illustrative list of possible sanctions is listed in paragraph 5, and discussion elements and an extensive background on the current crisis are included in paragraphs 10-17 below.

End summary.

Action Requests-Sanctions

¶4. (C) Department requests action addressees in Security Council capitals to approach host governments, in cooperation with other Security Council members as useful, to discuss the future of UNMEE and how the Security Council should address the challenge posed to its authority by Eritrea. Department requests USUN to do the same with appropriate UN Missions in New York. Drawing on points provided below, posts should note that we see little prospect for UNMEE to play an effective role given Eritrean restrictions, and discuss how the Security Council might use targeted sanctions on Eritrea

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to encourage a more cooperative approach from the Eritrean regime. Embassies Amman and New Delhi should assess host government views on next steps for UNMEE as well as their willingness, as the principal troop contributors to UNMEE, to build support amongst Security Council members for sanctions or other measures targeted at Eritrea.

¶5. (C) Action addressees should assess the utility and level of support for targeted sanctions, and specifically which measures might be most successfully imposed and effectively implemented in this context. Department is especially interested in the views of African members of the Security Council. Potential options include:

- Imposing a travel ban on key Eritrean government officials.
- Placing an assets freeze on these same officials and/or other Eritrean assets/resources.
- Imposing trade, investment, or other restrictions related to Eritrean resources, including mining.
- Imposing an arms embargo on Eritrea.

Action Requests-Assessing the Future of UNMEE

¶6. (U) Department also requests action addressees located in Security Council capitals and USUN to assess the attitudes of host governments and/or their UN Missions in New York on the possible disbandment of UNMEE, how to keep a UN presence in Ethiopia and Eritrea, and what future role the UN can play in the border conflict.

(Note to Embassies Beijing, Moscow, Paris, and Zagreb: Host countries are Security Council Members and also contribute a small number of military observers (MILOBs) to UNMEE.)

¶7. (U) Department requests USUN to seek DPKO's view on next steps for UNMEE, and to examine which configuration and locations of military and civilian personnel, if any, could allow UNMEE to observe the military movements in the border area and permit implementation of measures to reduce tension between Ethiopia and Eritrea. In particular, USUN should seek

DPKO,s recommendation on whether or not the Security Council should take action now to reconfigure or formally disband UNMEE.

18. (SBU) Department also requests USUN approach DPA and Under Secretary General for Political Affairs Lynn Pascoe to gain

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DPA,s insights on what type of UN presence on the ground is necessary, sustainable, and can most effectively support Pascoe,s efforts to bring Ethiopia and Eritrea into direct talks aimed at normalizing relations. USUN should specifically address the efficacy of a political mission.

19. (U) Department requests Embassies Amman and New Delhi to ask host governments to consider the option of moving equipment being used by UNMEE to other UN peacekeeping operations in Africa, specifically Darfur.

Suggested Discussion Elements

10. (U) Posts may wish to draw upon the suggested points below in discussions with host government and/or UN Missions.

Begin points.

-The restrictions placed on UNMEE by Eritrea are in contravention to its obligations to the U.N. Security

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Council, and are an unacceptable interference with a UN peacekeeping mission and with its ability to fulfill the mandate authorized. They aggravate an already dangerous situation and raise serious questions about whether the UN can or should continue to field a peacekeeping mission in Eritrea.

-In the absence of a fundamental shift in Eritrea,s behavior, Eritrea's assault on a UN Mission cannot be allowed to stand unchallenged. Eritrea,s actions set a negative and unacceptable precedent which could have broader implications on the future of UN peacekeeping operations elsewhere, including Darfur.

-The Council established UNMEE at the request of Ethiopia and Eritrea, but is under no obligation to maintain such a mission in the face of abusive acts by Eritrea.

-Eritrea has confronted the UN through its restrictions on UNMEE, most recently its refusal to reinstate fuel deliveries to the Mission, its subsequent obstruction of UNMEE,s temporary relocation, and its disregard of the Security Council,s demand in Resolution 1798 that it provide UNMEE with the necessary access, support and protection required for the performance of its duties, to which Eritrea has given its consent. Eritrea has also remilitarized the TSZ, expelled western UNMEE personnel, imposed a flight ban on the peacekeeping operation, and limited ground travel.

-Given Eritrea,s failure to comply with the Security Council,s demands to end its restrictions on UNMEE, we believe that the Security Council will need to meet within the next weeks to adopt a resolution on the future UN role in the Ethiopia-Eritrea border conflict.

-We would favor maintaining a UN presence in the region if it can be effective in reducing tensions or deterring the parties from any actions that could resume a conflict in the region. Our preliminary assessment, however, is that there is little the UN can do under current circumstances other than provide a limited political presence in both countries to facilitate dialogue and observe political developments.

-We are open to exploring other ideas such as the reconfiguration of UNMEE into a more limited military observer mission, but question whether this could be a viable option unless there is a fundamental shift in Eritrea,s behavior.

-We believe that the Security Council can only use the threat of targeted sanctions if such measures can be successfully imposed and effectively implemented. We will not support empty gestures.

-If Security Council members determine that targeted sanctions on Eritrea would be effective, we should consider linking imposition of sanctions to a date certain for Eritrea to comply with UN demands.

End points.

¶11. (U) Posts are requested to report results by March 5, 2008 via front channel cable slugged for IO/PSC Tanaz Khambatta, IO/PSC Erin Crowe, and AF/E. Post should copy Embassies Addis Ababa and Asmara.

Background

¶12. (U) UNMEE is a Chapter VI peacekeeping operation first established to monitor compliance with and facilitate implementation of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities of June 2000, an accord between Ethiopia and

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Eritrea that ended the 1998-2000 war. This agreement was followed in December 2000 by the Algiers Agreement, in which the parties agreed to several steps to resolve issues that divide the parties, including the boundary dispute. The Agreement created a demilitarized zone in Eritrea close to its border with Ethiopia, commonly referred to as the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ)--most of UNMEE,s troops have been located there. The accord also established the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) to delimit and demarcate the boundary. The EEBC issued a delimitation decision on April 13, 2002, but was unable to demarcate the boundary due to lack of cooperation by the parties. Eritrea subsequently remilitarized the TSZ, and for over two years Eritrean restrictions on UNMEE troops has hampered their movements and UNMEE,s ability to execute its mandate.

¶13. (U) Since November 2007, Eritrea has refused UNMEE permission to purchase or import fuel. On January 30, 2008, when the Security Council adopted Resolution 1798 (2008), extending the mandate of UNMEE for a period of six months, the Security Council expressed its grave concern over the continuing restrictions Eritrea has placed on UNMEE, particularly its refusal to reinstate fuel deliveries to the Mission. The critical fuel crisis forced Secretary General Ban to address a letter to the President of the Security Council on February 1, 2008, warning that if Eritrean authorities did not reinstate fuel supplies by February 6, 2008, he would be compelled to instruct UNMEE to begin relocating the Mission,s personnel and equipment from Eritrea, to avoid total demobilization of the Mission and for the safety and security of UN personnel (SYG Ban had previously contacted Eritrean President Isaias about the situation).

¶14. (U) Currently, Eritrea continues to deny fuel to UNMEE, not only preventing the Mission from executing its mandate, but also complicating its efforts to relocate to Ethiopia (as originally planned) or withdraw. Additionally, Eritrea is demanding that UNMEE depart through the capital city of Asmara or through the port cities of Assab and Massawa, the same points where UNMEE entered the country.

¶15. (U) Reports from the ground note that at present, troops

are regrouping in the capital Asmara and withdrawing from the country. However, the process of moving all of the forces from the TSZ, along the Ethiopia-Eritrea border, to the capital Asmara, will exhaust all UNMEE fuel reserves. As a result, troop contributing countries, particularly India which has the largest UN presence in the country, may be forced to leave their equipment in Eritrea.

¶16. (U) Despite its restrictions on UNMEE, Eritrea continues to call on the Security Council to ensure the removal of Ethiopian occupation of Eritrean territories in breach of the Algiers Peace Agreement and the UN Charter,⁸ even though this action is not within UNMEE's mandate or capabilities. Eritrea appears to be holding UNMEE troops and equipment hostage in a misguided attempt to force the Security Council to pressure Ethiopia to accept the demarcation decision by map coordinates made by the EEBC in November 2006, and made effective by its terms November 2007. The EEBC took this approach due to lack of cooperation from both parties. However, Ethiopia has rejected the EEBC's approach as inconsistent with international law, while Eritrea has accepted it. Both parties accuse the other of being in breach of the Algiers Agreements. Meanwhile, Ethiopian troops remain on territory that the EEBC awarded to Eritrea. But the Security Council will not accept the linkage Eritrea is trying to establish between the border dispute and Eritrea's restriction on the free movement of UNMEE's personnel, equipment, and assets.

¶17. (U) Eritrea has effectively forced the Mission out of its borders, despite the fact that the peacekeeping operation was

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established by the Security Council at the invitation of both Ethiopia and Eritrea. Eritrea is responsible for the safety and security of UNMEE peacekeepers, and Eritrea's interference with UNMEE is an assault on the UN that set a negative precedent and could have broader implications on the future of UN peacekeeping operations elsewhere, including Darfur.

¶18. (U) Minimize considered.
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